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Evaluation

Management response to the evaluation of UNDP contribution to strengthening local governance

Context, background and findings

1. This report summarizes UNDP's management's response to the evaluation of our contribution to strengthening local governance. This evaluation was mandated by the Executive Board in 2008.

UNDP and local governance

2. For UNDP, local governance comprises the combined set of institutions, systems and processes, at the local level, through which local authorities interact with and provide services to citizens, groups and local communities, and through which these latter articulate their interests and needs, mediate their differences and exercise their rights and obligations. The building blocks of effective, democratic local governance are many: transparent and robust central-local relationships, citizen participation, partnerships among key stakeholders at the local level, capacity of local actors, multiple flows of information, institutions of accountability, and an inclusive and pro-poor orientation. While local development is an essential condition to ensure the geographical spread of human development, effective local governance complements that process in support of inclusive and rights-compliant societies.

3. Hence, the importance of local governance as a mechanism for inclusive representation and participation, poverty reduction, economic development, reducing inequalities and strengthening social cohesion explains UNDP's increasing efforts to promote local-governance initiatives that support human development. Developing local-governance capacity is essential so as to be able to deliver on the Millennium Development Goals promises (for example, to localize work on the Millennium Development Goals in Tanzania). It is critical to the process of making states more inclusive and effective. It is essential for post-crisis state building: for the restoration of basic security, the provision of

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basic services and the transition from humanitarian relief to development. (Examples here include the Aceh Government Transformation Program in Indonesia and the Inter-Municipal Cooperation for Efficient Service Delivery initiative in Macedonia.) Developing local-governance capacity is also an integral component of effective responses to the challenges presented by climate change, natural disasters (for example, the response manifested by UNDP's integrated early recovery support to severely affected villages after the earthquake in south-west China) and rapid urbanization (for example, the effort to assess urban governance in Nigeria). Further, local governance capacity is critical to enhancing community participation in decision-making. (An example here is UNDP's work to institutionalize local-level public consultations through the People's Committees in Viet Nam.)

4. UNDP's interventions in local governance are taking place in nearly every programme country, under various forms and with diverging levels of support from the different practice areas. Laudable successes have been achieved in using area- based development as a vehicle for improving state-society relationships at the local level (for example, in Ukraine). UNDP continues to support decentralization as part of national processes of legislative, institutional and fiscal reform; for instance, there is the multi-donor Local Governance Support Programme in Bhutan. But the attention to local governance also allows UNDP to focus on those regions or municipalities that are lagging in human development, regardless of whether a decentralization policy has been designed or implemented. Examples here include UNDP support to the Mathanna Governorate in Iraq, the ART Initiative in support of local development in the Dominican Republic's border provinces with Haiti, and the local-governance initiative in the Sekong province in Laos). UNDP has also been a leader in helping national counterparts create conducive legal and institutional environments for more inclusive participation at the sub-national level. An example is the Local Governance Support Programme in Timor-Leste, which is the product of collaboration between UNDP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF).

5. UNDP efforts to address the rights of indigenous and other disadvantaged groups show that poor and marginalized populations remain at the core of our work on local governance. These efforts include: regional programmes to support indigenous peoples in Asia and Latin America; the project to enhance the political participation of Afro-Colombian people in Colombia; and UNDP's support to the district councils in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh.

6. While previously disaster management was mainly considered a national task, local governance has become an important entry point for addressing climate change and for disaster risk management. In line with this, more than 4,800 poor, earthquake-affected villages in mountainous and remote areas of southern China have benefited from UNDP-supported interactions between local governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. These interactions have assisted state and non-state actors in a locally driven process that is actively promoting grassroots democracy and local governance in China. Recent interventions at the country level are also focusing on enhancing transparency and accountability in local governance or on strengthening essential functions to support the legal empowerment of the poor. An example of the former is the local governance integrity index in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The improving of civil registry systems in Burundi and Cape Verde are examples of the latter.

7. UNDP offers a multilateral platform for convening different stakeholders, facilitating South-South cooperation and debating multiple perspectives on what can be a politically charged issue. The close partnership between UNDP and UNCDF weds UNDP's solid

track record in bringing state and non-state actors together to address critical human-development policy issues, with UNCDF's extensive experience in the area of fiscal decentralization for improved service delivery.

Management response to the evaluation

8. UNDP appreciates the manner in which the evaluation was conducted, combining Assessment of Development Results reports, project evaluations, programme and project documents, and national development strategies, desk reviews and field visits. Given the range of contexts and programmes, however, six field assessments can provide only a partial picture of UNDP's local governance work and approaches.

9. UNDP also appreciates the holistic aspect of the evaluation — the attention paid to how UNDP works collectively at the sub-national level and uses local governance as a platform for creating entitlements (through enhanced representation and participation) and for encouraging the non-discriminatory provision of goods and services. We are committed to further strengthening cross-practice approaches, to building on ongoing initiatives, and to working closely with national partners, United Nations agencies, other development partners and civil society to ensure that our local-governance work benefits the most vulnerable.

10. UNDP management is encouraged to read that our local-governance work is considered highly relevant, builds on strong national ownership and is aligned with national priorities. The report stresses the *numerous instances where UNDP has helped build capacities of state and non-state actors, empower local communities, given "voice" and representation to the socially disadvantaged, built trust between government and people, promote dialogue and improve service delivery, including under conditions of conflict recovery and prevention.* We acknowledge that more efforts and resources are needed to secure more meaningful entitlements for the poor, and to enhance their legal empowerment.

11. The report points to three main shortcomings: lack of coherence in our approach; insufficient strategic focus in our operations; and limited visibility in terms of knowledge sharing. The key actions proposed in response to the findings build on ongoing work and comprise four types of initiatives focused on: (1) *strategy*, by finalizing the development of a strategic framework and guidelines to steer an integrated local-governance approach; (2) *implementation* by means of existing and upcoming global, regional and country-level cross-practice initiatives; (3) *capacity development* by means of guidance and training on results-based management and integrated local-governance programming; and (4) *United Nations partnership* involving guidelines and training to integrate local governance effectively into common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance processes. The report justifies the investments that need to be made to fully operationalize these initiatives. The report's findings are also an opportunity for UNDP to further align its local-governance work around three corporate priorities: (1) accelerating progress on the Millennium Development Goal at the local level; (2) post-crisis state building and transition from humanitarian relief to development; and (3) local-level resilience in the face of climate change and to promote environmental sustainability.

12. In light of the key role played by local governments in steering local economic and political developments, working with these governments remains essential for UNDP. At the same time, given civil society's contribution to service delivery, accountability and the extension of democratic space, UNDP will support legal frameworks that help civil society organizations to form, operate and pursue legitimate, law-abiding goals, and we are

committed to promoting, through our local-governance programming, voice and accountability. At the 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, heads of State and Governments called on civil society to enhance its contribution to the achievement of these Goals. UNDP, responding to this call, is in the process of improving its internal policies and mechanisms for partnering with civil society actors in general and with indigenous peoples' organizations in particular. (The materials concerned include: the Toolkit for Strengthening Partnerships with civil society; the March 2010 guidance on programmes and operations policies and procedures; the 2010 United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) guidance package; the 2008 United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues; the operational guidance "Engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Other Forest Dependent Communities" of the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD); and the 2010 resources guide and toolkit prepared by UNDP and the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (UNHCHR) to address development programming for marginalized communities.)

13. UNDP recognizes the importance of scaling up local-governance initiatives and of ensuring that the lessons emerging from pilot projects usefully inform future policy decisions and their implementation. The lessons learned from our experiences — for example, from area-based development in Ukraine, from development of the emerging regions in Ethiopia; and from decentralization and local development in Cambodia — suggest that the progress takes time and is incremental and often unpredictable. Under the very different conditions obtaining in these countries, small-scale pilots gradually gained national ownership; monitoring and evaluation systems were introduced; and these systems were then improved in order to demonstrate cost-effective results and impacts, secure future funding, and enhance the evidence base for future interventions. In each of these sample countries, the initial project became embedded in broader political, social and economic development planning and captured the attention and support of the broader donor community. Regional initiatives can also support this process as they can serve as laboratories for innovation, as incubators of practices, and as tools for and sources of knowledge codification and sharing.

14. Addressing local governance from a holistic and cross-cutting perspective presents new challenges. The more complex the task, the more difficult — in terms of capacity and resources — it is to scale up such initiatives. At the same time, a more holistic approach to local governance offers opportunities to better link outputs to broader development outcomes at the local level. The mid-term review of UNDP's Strategic Plan allows further opportunities to reflect on the cross-practice linkages between current outcomes and for capturing the complexity of integrated, local-governance development programmes.

Annex. Key recommendations and management response

Evaluation recommendation 1: UNDP should more explicitly and effectively mainstream local governance into all its programmatic areas of support by developing a coherent framework that is firmly grounded in the practice of human development.

UNDP should develop a unified framework that identifies and establishes the many linkages of the essential constituents of local governance with human development. Central to such an exercise will be the articulation of theories of change that underscore the different connections between various local-governance reform measures and an expansion of human capabilities. That should help UNDP to look beyond processes and projects that promote participation, market-led development, biodiversity, etc., to more tangible outcomes such as political empowerment, greater voice for the disadvantaged, transparency and accountability as well as promotion of sustainable livelihoods for the poor, peace and security, and conflict prevention.

Such an overarching framework for local governance should be informed by learning from the rich and diverse experience of UNDP in this area. While developing such a framework, it will be important to keep in mind that a "one-size-fits-all" approach may dilute the relevance, hamper local ownership and adversely affect the sustainability of local-governance reforms. Guidance notes need to be updated and revised based on the wealth of existing UNDP knowledge and experience in the field of local governance, and new ones need to be developed to address different aspects of local governance and decentralization in different contexts.

Management response: Management supports the idea of developing a strategy note on local governance. It has in 2010, taken a series of actions to support the development of a strategic vision to steer our future work on local governance in a holistic and cross-practice manner. (The actions include regional stocktaking papers on public administration and local governance and "An Overview of Trends and Developments in Public Administration and Local Governance", as well as a draft discussion paper on public administration and local governance: "Building Bridges between the State and the People"). As part of the United Nations joint effort to implement the recommendations contained in the Report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict (A/63/881–S/2009/304), UNDP is also steering the ongoing work on the role of public administration and local governance in post-conflict environments. These efforts will culminate in a strategy note that will guide UNDP's practices in addressing local governance in an integrated, coordinated manner, recognizing the specific challenges encountered in various conditions and environments. Building on UNDP's extensive work in the field, further guidelines will be developed on the role of local governance in each of the key priority areas. More efforts are also needed, both in terms of analysis and guidance, in order to promote gender equity, including as regards the leadership roles (political and managerial) played by women at the local level. Gender equity will therefore be an integral part of the strategy note and guidance notes. The strategy note will also include guidance on partnerships within the United Nations as well as with other development partners and civil society organizations. The strategy note and guidance notes will be the subject of broader discussions within UNDP practices and groups, regional bureaux, regional centres, associated funds and programmes, UNDG and relevant United Nations agencies. These agencies are to include the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations Environment Programme.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
1.1 Strategy note on UNDP's cross-practice approach to local governance for local development with UNCDF, United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and so forth	By May 2011	Bureau for Development Policy (BDP)		

1.2. Guidance notes on local governance and local development developed in close collaboration with country offices and coordinated with other United Nations agencies and with the involvement of associated funds	January – December 2011	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) and BDP		

Evaluation recommendation 2: In developing new pilot initiatives on local governance, UNDP should be more rigorous in ensuring that they can be, and are, upscaled in support of broader policy and programmatic development results.

UNDP should invest more thoroughly in the development of pilot initiatives in order to ensure their success. At the outset that would involve conducting in-depth problem analysis and involving the central government, subnational governments, local communities, non-state actors and other development partners in order to establish the initiative's potential for success. That approach will facilitate the development of mechanisms that will support the upscaling of the pilot initiative and the sustainability of its benefits. It would imply the establishment of rigorous planning frameworks, including meaningful indicators, baselines and targets. It would also require regular monitoring and evaluation, including of unintended effects, and involving all stakeholders, in order to learn from experience as the project is implemented. Finally, exit strategies should be clearly defined and implemented and lessons learned documented, as upscaling in most cases will be led by national authorities with the support of other partners.

Management response: The evaluation affirms that UNDP's interventions are relevant, have a high degree of national ownership and are aligned with national priorities, hence acknowledging that most of our interventions harmonize with national policies and plans. Pilot projects allow UNDP and its counterparts to be innovative, learn from different approaches and take calculated risks, and a number of them have ultimately led to important and sustained transformational change. We agree that not all our projects have shown clear evidence of influencing larger efforts to reform legal and policy frameworks. We also recognize that we still have too many small projects with limited budgets and unrealistic timelines. Addressing local governance more sustainably requires *UNDP* to improve cross-practice collaboration, and to enhance government capacities to strengthen intergovernmental coordination and inter-ministerial policy dialogue and policy implementation. For *UNDG*, there is a need to support inter-agency collaboration on local governance in terms of both strategy and implementation (CCA and UNDAF). In line with the strategic plan, UNDP has put in place a series of global and regional programmes to promote a more strategic, holistic and longer-term approach to local governance and local development.

These programmes include a new global initiative and funding framework "Scaling up Support for the MDGs at Local Level", which was launched as part of UNDP's MDG Breakthrough Strategy. It involves a partnership between UNCDF and UNDP's practice areas (poverty, democratic governance, capacity development). The new phase of the ART Initiative (decentralized cooperation for local development) harmonizes with UNDP's corporate approach to local governance. Several environmental governance programmes (UN-REDD and the Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme) have the potential to spur cross-practice work. A corporate initiative "Governance for State Building and Peacebuilding" is being developed and is slated to include a strong local-governance component. Meanwhile integration of different practices is happening in the regions, as acknowledged in the evaluation on regionalization. An example here is the initiative of UNDP, UNCDF, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) on local service delivery related to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Asia.

Additional investments are needed, however, to fully operationalize such initiatives. There are increasing numbers of area-based and integrated regional development projects that promote a cross-practice approach to local governance. Since 2009, budgets and durations of Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF) projects have also been doubled. As explained in the text of the present document, creating a conducive environment so that pilot projects can be scaled up is a long and incremental process which depends on national-level support, effective monitoring and evaluation systems, and solid partnerships. At the same time, the aim is not to systematically scale up all pilots, which is ultimately the choice of

national policy-makers. The aim is to use the lessons from pilot projects to inform policy choices, and to use the demonstrated value of a pilot project to guide policy implementation. Such projects can play a critical role in the development of transformative legislation or policy interventions, without there being any need for the projects to be scaled up. In addition to using the global and regional programmes as vehicles for more strategic and integrated local-governance work, country offices will be encouraged and helped to use properly the newly launched planning and monitoring tools which provide clearer corporate standards for defining realistic outcomes, for selecting indicators and for monitoring progress. An online learning platform on managing for development results is expected to be launched by 2011. Guides and toolkits (on measuring local governance, methodologies for governance and capacity assessments) will support well-informed programme design. UNDP will ensure that indicators for measuring cross-practice local-governance initiatives are adapted to the local context and are fully owned by national stakeholders. Better use of United Nations planning tools (common country assessments, UNDAFs), and of joint programming and joint monitoring will help UNDP to better capitalize on the work of other United Nations agencies, and thereby increase the prospects for the local-governance projects. The strategy note and various guidance papers (including the ones available on civil society and indigenous peoples, volunteerism for development, and disaster risk management) will be used to help UNDG with its work on training materials.

Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**	**Tracking***	
			Comments	**Status**
2.1. Global and regional programmes and initiatives support an increasing number of country offices to respond to demand for strategic and sustainable local-governance initiatives	2011 – 2013	BDP, BCPR, regional bureaux, UNCDF		
2.2. Training of staff in support of joint local-governance programming (for common country assessments and UNDAFs)	May 2011 – December 2012	UNDP Learning Resources Centre, BDP, UNCDF, United Nations System Staff College		
2.3 Lessons learned from pilots are systematically discussed with government partners and the decision to scale up or not is made jointly	2011 onwards	Country offices		

Evaluation recommendation 3: UNDP should more proactively and systematically collate, codify, analyze, distil and disseminate the lessons learned from the extensive experience it has in the field of local governance.

UNDP needs to more systematically produce knowledge products that distil the lessons learned from its vast experience in local governance across diverse and difficult settings. The extensive body of knowledge regarding local governance should be properly codified, collated and analysed. Where such documentation and analyses exist, effective mechanisms should be established for bureaux and managers within UNDP and outside to tap them effectively and systematically.

Management response: UNDP has gained a wealth of experience in the area of local governance, and in relation to all the practice areas. Country offices and regional centres have codified this knowledge, but without always ensuring that the lessons learned and tools developed are shared throughout the organization. Despite documented research and active knowledge-sharing via the networks, management agrees that there is still a need to intensify cross-practice comparative analysis and knowledge codification, as well as sharing within and between regions. Regular exchanges of the knowledge will be supported through the development of a joint UNDP-UNCDF community of practice related to local governance and local development. This effort will also involve UNV and other United Nations

agencies such as UN-Habitat, UNICEF and WHO. UNDP is currently reviewing and upgrading its knowledge-management policies. We will promote real-time sharing of information and will also open up our networks to other United Nations staff and external experts, civil society and institutions. This will allow the capturing of knowledge from project staff working on the ground with local communities. Enhanced partnerships and increased advocacy in national and international forums will help to increase our visibility and the dissemination of our policy positions.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
3.1. Joint community of practice on local governance and local development (with UNCDF and United Nations agencies); resources allocated to make community operational	2011	BDP and UNCDF		
3.2. Enhance partnerships in the areas of local governance and local development and increase advocacy in national and international forums	June 2011 - 2013	BDP, BCPR, regional centres, Partnerships Bureau		

Evaluation recommendation 4: UNDP should strengthen its partnerships with its associated funds and programmes in order to enhance the effectiveness of its initiatives in local governance.

UNDP should take measures to further strengthen and streamline corporate arrangements for deepening local governance in partnerships with the associated funds and programmes. In order to improve the effectiveness of their partnership at the country level, UNDP and UNCDF should jointly develop a long-term strategic plan for local governance that is consistent with and integral to national development plans and priorities. That would help in more systematically addressing deficiencies in capacity-building and resource mobilization that arise and adversely affect sustainability. Better understanding and communication of the roles and responsibilities of UNDP and UNCDF would help to reduce inefficiencies in operations. They should work on improving advocacy and lobbying functions, both within the United Nations and outside. The UNDP partnership with UNV at the country level should move beyond project collaboration and become more strategic, based on a shared long-term vision of strengthening local governance. UNDP needs to make a more explicit commitment to the mandates of UNV, and not view the partnership merely as a management arrangement. In other words, UNDP should commit itself to partnering with UNV so as to mainstream volunteerism in order to reap the many benefits that such mainstreaming can bring to people, while also ensuring that the deployment of volunteers builds local capacities in a sustainable manner.

Management response: At country-level in most of the least developed countries UNDP and UNCDF are already working together effectively to carry out joint programmes on local governance and local development. At the corporate level, a new joint UNDP-UNCDF initiative ("Scaling up Support for the MDGs at Local Level") has been launched, and UNCDF was also involved in the design of the second phase of the ART Initiative. UNCDF and UNDP jointly organized the Global Forum on Local Development held in Uganda in October 2010. UNCDF recently strengthened its regional teams, which will allow it to better coordinate technical support to UNDP-UNCDF joint programmes at the country level. These developments testify to the significant strengthening of the UNDP-UNCDF relationship over the past several years. The senior managements of UNDP and UNCDF are committed to further deepening this collaboration through joint assessments, joint programming and joint monitoring at the country level, through joint implementation of regional and global initiatives, and through joint knowledge codification. UNDP and UNCDF are also committed to advocating together for recognition of the importance of local governance to sustainable and inclusive development. To support these commitments, UNDP and UNCDF will jointly develop a community of practice related to local governance and local development. This effort will also include UNV and other United Nations agencies (including DESA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF and UN Women). UNCDF and UNV will be closely associated

with the development of UNDP's strategy note and guidance notes on local governance for local development. Building on past experiences and lessons learned from the recent global and regional initiatives, a UNDP-UNCDF flagship publication on local governance for human development will be commissioned in 2011. UNDP's partnership with UNV will be reviewed through the joint work on the local-governance strategy note and related guidance notes. Both UNDP and UNV are committed to a more strategic partnership based on a shared long-term vision of how to strengthen local-governance capacities. UNV will also be invited to join the UNDP-UNCDF community of practice. UNDP will work with UN Women on conducting a review of lessons learned regarding the United Nations approach to public administration and local governance in post-conflict environments. (This is in response to the Report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict.)

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
4.1. Joint UNDP-UNCDF flagship publication on local governance and human development	2012	BDP,BCPR and UNCDF		
4.2. UNV/UNDP partnership on local governance reviewed through strategy note, guidance note and regular working meetings	2011 – 2012	BDP, BCPR and UNV		
4.3. Collaboration with UN Women on a lessons learned review of United Nations engagement in public administration and local governance in post-conflict	December 2010 – September 2011	BDP and BCPR		
See also recommendations 1 and 3 above				